



Trail Talk

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

Trail Talk Volume 13, Issue 11

Vanishing Species Story by Terry Gaughen, MTRP Volunteer

Many Trail Guides have noticed the disappearance of certain plant species within the confines of Mission Trails Park. To that end, the team of Ranger Heidi Gutknecht and Volunteer Terry Gaughen (henceforth: "The G-Team") have made multiple excursions into the park in search of these vanishing species. The G-Team has been successful. The only problem is, the more we find them, the more they disappear. That's because we physically eradicate them!

The plants on which we mostly concentrate are Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), and tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*). The team has made excellent progress on these four non-natives.

We also look for prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), curly dock (*Rumex crispus*), bristly ox-tongue (*Picris echioides*), and tumble pigweed/ white tumbleweed (*Amaranthus albus*). Curiously, prostrate pigweed (*Amaranthus blitoides*) is a native species. The team also removes the somewhat uncommon flax-leaf fleabane (*Conyza bonariensis*) and its very common cousin, horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*). Though horseweed is a native (Canada to Mexico), as is

cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*), both are so invasive, they need to be controlled. One non-native the G-Team does not remove is Australian saltbush

(*Schinus terebinthefolius*), California (a.k.a. Peruvian) pepper tree (*Schinus molle*), pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), multiple - many quite large - myoporum



The "G-Team"

(*Atriplex semibaccata*). Despite its name, it is a prostrate, non-invasive plant. So, for the most part, we leave it alone.

The team has also removed, mostly in small numbers (sometimes only one), numerous exotic landscape plants, such as eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.), oleander (*Nerium oleander*), Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*), acacia (*Acacia* spp.), Brazilian pepper tree

specimens (*Myporum laetum*), one six-foot and lots of small Mexican fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta*), and several ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.). The team still has one, somewhat large ash tree to remove. It is in the river bottom just on the edge of Father Serra Trail. Many of the above exotics were in the river bottom, some near the grinding rocks, others near Old Mission Dam.

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Writers wanted...

- Have an interesting story or photo you'd like to share with other Trail Guides? Send them to 'Trail Talk' editor Millie Basden at trailtalkeditor@yahoo.com. Please include "Trail Talk" in the subject line!

Speakers Needed...

- Have you heard an interesting speaker or know an interesting topic that would be appropriate for one of our monthly meetings? If so, please send your ideas to Brian or Ondina Moehl.



Next Trail Guide
Monthly Meeting:
Wednesday,
November 11th
6:30 pm—
In the Visitor Center
Classrooms

Monthly Meeting Minutes—October 14, 2009

There were 28 Trail Guides, 2 guests, and Ranger Heidi in attendance.

Fred's number for October was 6. The answer in the form of a question is "How many people in California have been killed by mountain lions since 1890?" These are listed at www.dfg.ca.gov/news/issues/lion/attacks.htm. He mentioned that in all of the United States and Canada for the same time period, there were only 21 deaths due to mountain lion attacks. This number was found on the Mountain Lion Foundation web site (www.mountainlion.org) and also at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fatal_cougar_attacks_in_North_America.

Ranger Heidi described the recent mountain lion encounter in the park and had several informational flyers from the Mountain Lion Foundation for Trail Guides.

Fred reminded Trail Guides to sign up for walks and record the number of visitors and some interesting observa-

tions from the walk, including how visitors learned about the walk.

Fred announced the prize winners for the best walk write-up in September: Terry & Wendy Esterly for their Twilight Walk on September 19.

"Ranger Heidi described the recent mountain lion encounter in the park..."

Chris Axtmann announced that she has put our walks on Craigslist.

Nancy Clement discussed the recent Early San Diego Regional History Conference.

John Hopper discussed the opportunity for Trail Guides to participate in Canyoneer pre-walks.

Millie Basden, the new *Trail Talk* editor, encouraged everyone to

submit articles to her at trailtalkeditor@yahoo.com and to Tom Walters.

Historic Dates for MTRP. Arleen Hitchcock gave an interesting presentation on the novel *Ramona*, published in 1884. She mentioned that, although the account is fictional, the author, Helen Hunt Jackson, had firsthand experience with Native Americans in Southern California. Alyson Wright gave an informative presentation on REI's Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids (PEAK) program.

Upcoming Events:

The next meeting is November 11, 6:30 p.m. in the Visitor Center classrooms. After a short business meeting, the program will be Greg Rubin, a local native plant landscaper, with a presentation titled "Native Landscape Myths and Legends."

Respectfully submitted,

Linda L. Kramer, Secretary

Vanishing Species

(Continued from page 1)

Of particular satisfaction, was the removal of nearly two dozen small (and scattered) salt cedars (*Tamarix ramosissima*) in Oak Canyon.

Although the G-Team is being successful causing multiple non-native species to vanish, we really don't expect to make much headway with the ubiquitous varieties of mustard or the seemingly never-ending types of non-native thistles.

On the positive side, giant reed (*Arundo donax*), artichoke thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*), and salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*) are pretty well gone from the park, verified by Mike Kelly (a well-known local naturalist, contracted by

MTRP to help eradicate some of the more pernicious species) although

you have removed "all those noxious weeds," there's always at least one more hiding from you!



Tree-of-heaven, a plant too tough even for the G-Team!
Photo by Chuck Barger, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

vestigial plants probably still exist. You all know how it is: when you think

It's amazing there are so many non-native species in the park. This article names about 25 of them. One species not yet mentioned is tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). There is a grove (an infestation!) of 150–200 trees on the north side of the river just east of Gate #9. The G-Team will not tackle them, but, will instead have Mike Kelly and his associates use their special expertise to eliminate them in the very near future.

So, Trail Guides, if you happen to see any non-natives while on your tours and hikes, please let either Ranger Heidi or Terry Gaughen know, and we'll do our best to "vanish" them!

Antigua California: Mission and Colony on the Peninsular Frontier, 1697-1768

A Book Review by Fred Kramer, Trail Guide

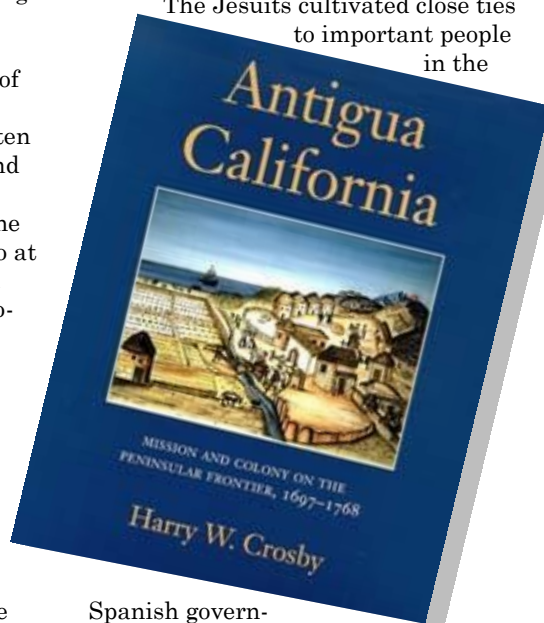
This book by Harry W. Crosby provides a thorough history of the establishment and operation of the Jesuit missions in Baja California¹. The Spanish had long desired to colonize California, going back to the days of Hernán Cortés. They erroneously believed the story of fabulous riches in *The Exploits of Esplandián*, a fictional account written by Garcí Ordóñez de Montalvo around 1500. They weren't successful until 1697 when the Jesuits established the first permanent mission and presidio at Loreto. They eventually established another 16 missions in the lower two-thirds of the peninsula before being expelled by Spanish royal decree in 1768.

Crosby gives a vivid description of mission life in Baja during the 18th century as the Jesuits brought Christianity to the Indians. The missionaries converted the local Indians, who would then live at the mission and work the fields, tend the livestock, and perform a multitude of other duties. In turn, the missionaries provided food, clothing, shelter, and religious instruction, but this turned out to be a tall order sometimes. The Jesuits encountered extremely harsh conditions, such as, lack of suitable land for crops and livestock, variable weather from year-to-year, sometimes hostile Indians, and irregular delivery of supplies from the mainland. Soldiers from the local presidio guarded the missions and ensured the Indians did as they were told by the missionaries. The Jesuits sometimes hired civilians for specific duties, such as tending livestock, herding mules, and constructing churches and other major buildings. Small communities formed around the missions.

The Jesuits were given complete authority on the peninsula, not only for mission affairs, but secular and military affairs as well. They selected all the personnel serving in California, including the military at the presidio, which was unique among the Spanish mission settlements. Crosby spends considerable time discussing the key people in Jesuit California, including missionaries, military, and others.

Many of the later ones also served in Alta California and became prominent there.

The Jesuits cultivated close ties to important people in the



Spanish government. This allowed them to operate autonomously in California for many years. However, there were issues that caused continuing controversy: suspicion that the Jesuits were secretly acquiring immense wealth from California's resources, the Jesuits' lack of support for economic development, their control over the military, and their procrastination in establishing missions in San Diego and Mon-

terey. As early as 1719, the Spanish crown had decreed the colonization Alta California to forestall other nations encroaching on their territorial claims. Eventually the Jesuit political machine could not overcome these issues, and the Spanish crown ordered the arrest and expulsion of the Jesuit missionaries from all of Spain's colonial possessions, including California.

Trail Guides will find this book (393 pages, plus appendices and extensive notes) interesting for a number of reasons. While Mission Trails relates most closely with the Franciscan missions in Alta California, their existence and success were directly due to the earlier Jesuit missions in Baja. Crosby describes the Spanish colonization process of establishing missions and presidios that is relevant for Alta California. Trail Guides will get insight into life during Spanish mission times through the detailed descriptions of how Jesuit missions were established, how they treated Indians, how they grew, how they operated, and how they eventually fell into disfavor with Spanish civil authorities.

¹ Originally the area was just called California. When missions were founded in San Diego and northward, this new area became known as Nueva California and the peninsula then as Antigua California. The terms Baja and Alta didn't come into usage until about 1800.

Name That Life Form!

by Millie Basden; photos by Peter Thomas, Trail Guides



Can you name this common life form photographed one spring day in MTRP?

(Answer on Page 4)

What's Happening at the Park

Name That Life Form (answer from page 3)

Saturday, November 7...

Canoyneer Walk—Join Naturalists from the San Diego History Museum Canoyneers for a hike around Lake Murray. Meet at 1 p.m. near the baseball fields at Murray Park Drive.

Friday, November 13...

Stars at Mission Trails—Join members of the San Diego Astronomy Association from sunset to 10 p.m. at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground's Day Use Parking Lot. Telescopes available (weather permitting.)

Saturday, November 14...

Star Party—Join resident stargazer and Trail Guide George Varga to view the night time sky. No moonlight this month. Jupiter will be low in the Southwest. Meet at the far end of the Kumeyaay Lake Campground Day Use Parking Lot. 5-8 p.m. (weather permitting.)

Saturday, November 21...

Guided Bird Walk—Join resident birder and Trail Guide Jeanne Raimond for an adventure in bird watching! This month: Visitor Center Loop—meet in front of the Visitor Center. 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.



The turban-like bud of Blue-Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) unfurls to a 6-petaled flower with bright yellow center. Note the brownish ovaries reflecting a later stage of development. Blue-Eyed Grass is found throughout North America, as various species of *Sisyrinchium*.



When the trees their summer splendor
Change to raiment red and gold,
When the summer moon turns mellow,
And the nights are getting cold;
When the squirrels hide their acorns,
And the woodchucks disappear;
Then we know that it is autumn,
Loveliest season of the year.

~ Carol L. Riser, *Autumn*



*If you can't do a walk
you signed-up for, ar-
range for someone to
take your place or let
Fred or Ranger Heidi
know you won't be
there.*

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

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The Trail Guide Program is dedicated to provide the visiting public with education and understanding of the unique environmental and historical attributes of Mission Trails Regional Park. The Trail Guides supplement the Park Rangers in outreach programs to the public.

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